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F I V E
L E T T E R S

T O T H E

Reverend Mr F——R,

Relative to his VINDICATION of the

M I N U T E S

O F T H E

Reverend Mr JOHN WESLEY.

[Price Sixpence.]



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

FIVE

LETTERS

TO THE

Reverend Mr. F. J.

Library of the University of Chicago

M I N E S



Reverend Mr. John Wesley

[Price Sixpence]

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Relative to his VINDICATION of the

M I N U T E S
O F T H E

Reverend Mr JOHN WESLEY.

Intended chiefly for the comfort of mourning
backsliders, and such as may have been
distressed and perplexed by reading Mr
WESLEY's Minutes, or the Vindication of
them.

Rich^d. Hill Esq^r.

By a F R I E N D.

L O N D O N:

Printed for E. and C. DILLY, in the Poultry.

M D C C L X X I.

FIVE

LETTERS

TO THE

Reverend Mr. R—

Relative to the Vindications of the

MINUTES

OF THE

Reverend Mr. Wesley.



intended chiefly for the use of ministers, and those who have been
afflicted and perplexed by reading the
Minutes of the Vindications of

them.

NEW YORK: D. A. A. & C.

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MDCCLXXII.

LETTER THE FIRST.

My very dear SIR,

I Think I cannot more properly begin this Letter, than in the words of that late faithful and eminent minister of JESUS CHRIST, the Reverend Mr GEORGE WHITEFIELD, who, writing to the Reverend Mr JOHN WESLEY on the subject of Election, Perseverance, and sinless Perfection, thus addresses his beloved friend. “ God “ only knows what unspeakable sorrow of heart “ I have felt on your account. Whether it be “ my infirmity or not, I frankly confess, that “ JONAH could not go with more reluctance against “ *Nineveh*, than I now take pen in hand to write “ against you. Was nature to speak, I had “ rather die than do it; and yet, if I am faithful “ to God, and to my own and others souls, I “ must not stand neuter any longer. I am very “ apprehensive that our common adversaries will “ rejoice to see us differing among ourselves. But “ what can I say? The children of God are in “ danger of falling into error. Nay, numbers “ have been misled,” &c. &c. &c.

Permit me now, dear SIR, to make the above words my own. God alone knows the sorrow of heart wherewith I address you; and how much the fear of casting stumbling blocks before some who are really sincere, and the apprehensions of giving occasion for malicious joy to others, who

B

desire

desire no greater satisfaction than to see the children of the Prince of Peace divided among themselves, had well nigh prevailed upon me to pour out my soul in silence, instead of publicly taking up the pen against you. But when I perceived the solicitude with which Mr WESLEY's preachers recommended your letters to Mr SHIRLEY in their respective congregations, and above all, how many of GOD's people had been perplexed and distressed by reading them; I say, when I perceived this to be the case, and had prayed to the Giver of all wisdom for direction, I could not but esteem it my indispensable duty to send out a few observations on your book, especially as no other person, that I know of, had made any reply to the doctrinal parts of it, from the time of its publication. With regard to the *Circular Letter* dated Bath, I shall studiously avoid the very mention of it, as whether the sending of it were in itself a wrong step or a right one, is of no manner of consequence in the matter of salvation. Neither shall I follow you page by page, but taking the Minutes in the order they stand shall dwell upon them more or less, as appears necessary.

FIRST THEN.—I have no objection to the use of that expression "*Man's faithfulness*," in a sober gospel sense of the words. Our LORD himself says, *be faithful unto death*. And I am persuaded that he will enable all his members, in a degree, to be so. But if it be supposed that the stability of the Covenant of Grace, and the faithfulness of GOD, are at all affected, either by the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of man, this doctrine I utterly reject; and think I cannot do otherwise, without rejecting the express declaration of Scripture,

ture, which says, in that glorious promise made to CHRIST, and in him to all his seed, in *Psalms lxxxix.* *I have found David my servant: with my holy oil have I anointed him. My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My Covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Believe me, dear SIR,*

With the greatest esteem,

Your sincere friend for CHRIST's sake,

December 2, 1771.

LETTER THE SECOND.

Dear SIR,

THAT we are to work *for* life (whether spiritual or eternal life be meant by the second Article of the Minutes) or that we are (according to the third Article) to do any previous work in order to justification, and to find favour with God, are assertions most exceedingly self-contradictory,

dictory, if we admit that all men are fallen in ADAM: for if it be a truth that *man is by nature dead in trespasses and sins, that in him dwelleth no good thing, and that the carnal mind is enmity against God*; then whilst a soul remains in this state of spiritual death and enmity, he can neither quicken himself, nor please God. And therefore the same Apostle, who affirms, that *they which are in the flesh* (that is, in their natural unregenerate state) *cannot please God*; addresses the believing Ephesians with, *you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins*. And if quickened, then pardoned and justified, according to Col. ii. 13. *And you, being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of the flesh, hath he quickened together with him*, HAVING FORGIVEN YOU ALL TRESPASSES. Spiritual life and pardon of sin, are inseparably connected. All who are delivered from the power of their natural darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, not only *shall have hereafter*, but have now *redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins*.

If we suppose that there are any conditional works before pardon and justification, then these works must either be the works of one who is in a state of nature, or in a state of grace; either condemned by the Law, or absolved by the Gospel: If the former, the Apostle has already determined that *he cannot please God*; because he is in a state of utter enmity against him, *yea alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart*. Not being grafted into CHRIST the living vine, he cannot bring forth any good fruit, nay, if our LORD himself may be credited, he can absolutely *do nothing at all* (that is) in the things of God; every

every imagination of the thoughts of his heart being only evil, and that continually. As soon therefore may we expect living actions from a dead corpse;—light out of darkness;—sight out of blindness;—love out of enmity;—wisdom out of ignorance;—fruit out of barrenness;—health out of sickness;—strength out of weakness;—something out of nothing;—as look for repentance or any one good work or thought, from a soul who is not quickened by the holy Ghost, and who hath not yet found favor and acceptance with God.

But if you tell me that I mistake your meaning, and that although we must *cease to do evil, and learn to do well*; must *repent, and do works meet for repentance, in order to justification, and to find favor with God*; yet you are far from supposing we can perform these things in our own natural strength. I ask then, in whose strength are they performed? You say in the strength of CHRIST, and by the power of the holy Ghost, according to those scriptures; *I can do all things through CHRIST strengthening me—being strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.* Then, dear SIR, it is most clear that every soul who works in the strength of CHRIST, and by the power of the holy Ghost, is already a pardoned, justified soul; he already HATH not only spiritual but *everlasting life*: and therefore all talk of his *working FOR life*, or in order to find favor with God, is not less absurd, than if you were to suppose that a man could at the same moment be both condemned and absolved;—awake and asleep;—dead and alive;—loved and hated of God;—be one with CHRIST, through his Spirit dwelling in the heart, and yet not have redemption, peace, and reconciliation through the blood of his cross.

Surely, dear SIR, you will not assert that a soul who is quickened together with CHRIST, and in whom the Spirit of JESUS dwells by his gracious influences, can be in a state of enmity with GOD; and if not in a state of enmity, then he must be in a state of pardon and reconciliation; and if in a state of pardon and reconciliation, then he has already *found favor* with GOD: and therefore the works which such an one produces, are certainly *from* life, not *for* life, because he *hath* found favor and is justified; not *in order to* find favor, and to be justified.

But to have recourse to example. What did the expiring Thief, what MARY MAGDALEN, what LYDIA the seller of purple, what the *Philippian* jailor, what the serpent-bitten *Israelites*, what PAUL himself do, in order to justification, and to find favor with GOD? Yea, what did any one of the members of the whole Church of *Corinth* do, to whom, though newly converted to the Christian faith, the Apostle writes as already *washed, sanctified, and justified in the Name of our LORD JESUS, and by the Spirit of our GOD*, 1 Cor. vi. 11. And the same Apostle exhorts his *Ephesians to forgive one another, even as GOD for CHRIST'S sake HATH FORGIVEN them*, Eph. iv. 32.

After all these testimonies, if that of our own Church may be permitted to bring up the rear, the declaration of her Thirteenth Article, that “Works before Justification *are not pleasant to* GOD, but *have in them the nature of sin;*” must immediately cut off all pretences which such works can put in towards finding favor with GOD, till it can be proved, that sins and good works are synonymous terms, and that man finds favor
with

with God by doing what is not pleasant and acceptable to him.

It appears therefore an undeniable truth, confirmed by the testimonies of scripture, common sense, the experience of all Christians recorded in the sacred books, and of the Church of *England* in her Thirteenth Article; that wherever God puts forth his quickening power upon a soul, it is in consequence of his having already taken that soul into covenant with himself, and having washed it white in the blood of the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. Pardon and reconciliation are already obtained by such an one. He is now *passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation.*

I do not indeed deny but the sense of pardon may often be withheld, where nevertheless the soul is really in a justified state. Pardon and peace with God, is one thing; the *testifying* of that pardon and peace to a sinner's conscience, is another. And this knowledge of our interest in CHRIST, is certainly to be sought in the use of all appointed means; we are *to seek that we may find, to ask that we may have, to knock that it may be opened unto us.* In this sense, all the texts you have brought to prove that man is to do something in order to obtain justification, and to find favor with God, admit of an easy solution; but upon any other plan are absolutely irreconcilable with the gospel scheme of acceptance, and of God's freely justifying the ungodly, *without money and without price.*

We will sum up the whole matter with the following Queries and Remarks concerning the persons whom you suppose are to work for life,

and in order to obtain justification and to find favor with God.

Are they believers, or are they not? Are they in CHRIST, or are they not? Do they bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, or do they not? Are they born again, or are they not?—The queries are nearly synonymous. They must be answered positively in the negative, or positively in the affirmative; yes, or no. There being no middle condition between spiritual life and spiritual death;—between a state of nature, and a state of grace;—between a state of faith, and of unbelief;—between a child of wrath, and a joint-heir with CHRIST;—between being born again of the Spirit, and being sensual, not having the Spirit.

If therefore your reply be in the negative: then I must still affirm, that *they which are in the flesh cannot please God.*—Without CHRIST we can do nothing;—without faith it is impossible to please God.

If you answer in the affirmative; then, dear SIR, you are reduced to the acknowledgment that a man may be a believer, and yet not have found favor with God;—that he may be interested in CHRIST, and yet have the wrath of God abiding on him;—that he may bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, and yet not be justified;—that he may be regenerate and born again, and yet remain under the curse of the law;—that he may be one with CHRIST, and CHRIST one with him; and yet not be pardoned and reconciled to God. All these contradictions I think you must unavoidably subscribe to, whilst you admit that there is any one work, call it *condition*, or what you will, before pardon and justification. And that

that Mr WESLEY was once of the same sentiment with me in this particular, is most clear from the following quotations out of his own works.

“ I believe no works can be previous to Justification, nor consequently *a condition* of it: “ but we are justified (being till that hour ungodly, and therefore incapable of doing any good works) by faith alone; faith without works; faith, though producing all, including no good works.” JOURNAL from Aug. 12, 1738, to Nov. 1739, p. 81.

Again; “ Whosoever thou art who desirest to be forgiven, and reconciled to the favor of God, do not say in thine heart, *I must first do this*; knowest thou not, that thou canst do nothing but sin till thou art reconciled?” Sermons, Vol. I. p. 119.

Once more; “ Whatsoever virtues (so called) a man may have (I speak of those to whom the gospel is preached, for what have I to do to judge them that are without) whatsoever good works (so accounted) he may do, it profiteth not, he is still a child of wrath, still under the curse, till he believes in JESUS.” Sermons, Vol. I. p. 96.

But are we not called upon to seek pardon again and again? Are we not taught by our LORD himself to forgive others, as we hope to be forgiven? Undoubtedly. For there is not a moment in which a child of God does not stand in need of fresh applications of the pardoning blood of JESUS to his soul. But this is no reason why he should ever lose the covenant-relationship he stands in towards God, nor why all trespasses are not already forgiven him. The iniquities of CHRIST’S people were all laid on him at once, they were all made

made to meet on him as it is in the margin, *Isa. liii. 6.* he answered every claim which Law and Justice could ever have against them, when he suffered, *the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.*

Dear SIR, What will become of you and me, if perfect payment was not made for our sins to the end of our lives, as well as to the year 1772. The sins we have already been guilty of, were as much laid upon CHRIST before we were born, and consequently before we committed them, as those which hereafter we may commit: (for *in many things we offend all, and there is not a just man upon earth, that liveth and sinneth not*;) if therefore the reconciliation be not already compleat and perfect, if there be not now a full discharge of all debts to God's people, they never can be discharged at all; there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin, than that which was offered when CHRIST bled upon the cross; and yet there is no believer who does not daily need to wash himself in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness.

These truths (mysteries indeed to the natural man!) being kept in view, we may easily solve that seeming paradox, that even justified souls continually stand in need of pardon, and are to seek the sense and application of it to their souls in the use of all appointed means.

But you attempt to prove that Mr WESLEY'S doctrine of *working* in order to find favor, and to attain justification, is as agreeable to sound reason as you suppose it to be agreeable to the word of God. Your Argument is this; that "*believing is previous to Justification.*" But, dear SIR, this is begging the question; and permit me to say

say that I deny the assertion. Waving all disputes concerning eternal Justification, or Justification in the mind and purpose of God, I maintain, that believing cannot possibly be previous to Justification; and you yourself must maintain the same, unless you will adopt the phrase of AN UNJUSTIFIED BELIEVER; whereas the holy Ghost teaches that *all who believe ARE justified*. CHRIST is freely held forth to sinners, as they lie *in their blood, as enemies, ungodly, rebellious, unjust, under the curse, without hope, without strength, &c.* and not as bringing this or that qualification of faith, repentance, or any thing else; and wherever CHRIST gives himself to a soul, he in the same instant works faith and repentance in that soul. We may as well suppose that a man eats before he takes any food, and that he sees before he receives the light of the sun, as that he believes before he is justified: for believing, and feeding upon CHRIST, are not more inseparably connected, than eating, and taking bodily food, or than seeing and receiving light are inseparably connected. Yea, true faith can no more subsist without its object CHRIST, than there can be a marriage without an husband.

From hence I conclude, that the doctrine of believing before justification (and thereby making the grace of faith a conditional work) is not less contrary to reason than it is to scripture itself. “Faith (saith St AUGUSTIN) is the lantern
 “that giveth light unto the soul; but as the
 “lantern giveth not light of itself, but as it is
 “lighted, so faith by its own act doth not justify,
 “but as it receiveth CHRIST, who is the true
 “light.”

Now,

Now, dear SIR, review the whole affair relative to man's working *for* life, and *in order to find favor with* God, and you will perceive that no alarm is taken, nor any letters sent through the various provinces against old MORDECAI for supposing that the woman mentioned *Luke xv.* lights a candle, sweeps the house, and searches diligently in order to find her lost piece; but because old MORDECAI insists upon it, that the piece lights the candle, sweeps the house, and searches diligently in order to find the woman*. Believe me,

Dear SIR,

With the truest regard,

Your sincere friend for CHRIST's sake,

LETTER THE THIRD.

Dear SIR,

HOW GOD may deal with the heathen world, is not for us to pry into; such prying was discouraged by our LORD himself, and evidences a desire of being *wise above what is written*. Suffice it

* *Note.* If there be any meaning at all in the parable, by the care of the woman is shewn that of our LORD in seeking and finding a lost sinner, and by the piece the sinner himself is set forth. The merciful JESUS both seeks and finds, but the piece is meerly passive. So the strayed sheep (mentioned in the foregoing verses) did not seek the Shepherd, but the Shepherd both sought and found his wandering sheep; hereby exactly verifying the words of the Prophet, *I am found of them that sought me not.*

it to believe, that all his dealings with the children of men are holy, just and good : And whilst, on the one hand, I should be fearful to affirm that every Pagan is inevitably lost, I should on the other be very careful of speaking too highly of their attainments, lest I should thereby seem to undervalue the inestimable blessing of a preached Gospel : for, if the Jew, as saith St PAUL, hath much profit and advantage every way above the heathen, how much more then hath the Christian ?

As to the particular instance of CORNELIUS, it has been so often controverted, that I shall only remark, that there is a material difference between saying, that *in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted*, and SHALL BE accepted. The verb is in the present tense, and therefore the plain sense of the passage is (not that by fearing God and working righteousness, he doth any thing to find favor, but) that in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness IS an accepted person, and proves himself to be so. CORNELIUS was a chosen vessel. As such he was quickened and freely pardoned, and as such he brought forth fruits meet for repentance ; but the knowledge of that JESUS in whom he was interested, was not fully revealed to him till after he had heard St PETER's Sermon ; though Mr HERVEY and others, upon good authority, seem to think that this was not the first time that this Gentile convert had heard of the Saviour.

I cannot by any means acquiesce with you, that the christian Church is obliged to Mr JOHN WESLEY for the introduction of the word *merit*, when applied to the works of man ; yea even though

though those works be wrought in him by the grace of GOD. In which sense, however, you are of opinion that *it may be joined to the words GOOD WORKS, and bear an evangelical meaning.* In order to be convinced of this, you desire the candid reader to consider, with Mr WESLEY, that GOD accepts and rewards no work but so far as it proceeds from his own grace through the Beloved; and that when he works in us by his Spirit, our works cannot (so far as he is concerned in them) but be in a sense meritorious; because they are his works. Yea, you say, that you are as much persuaded that the grace of CHRIST merits in the works of his members, though they themselves merit nothing but hell; as you are persuaded that gold in the ore hath its intrinsic worth, though it is mixed with dust and dross which are good for nothing. You assert, that whosoever denies this, maintains an Antichristian position, namely, that CHRIST has lost his power of meriting. And you conclude the paragraph with declaring, that the cry of Heresy and Popery will not make you give up this fundamental truth of Christianity, that JESUS is the same, the very same deserving LORD, yesterday, to day, and for ever.

There is no small degree of chicanery here. The reader's mind is left impressed with a striking truth, by which means all that goes before will be the more readily admitted. But though I agree with my dear friend, that JESUS is the same deserving LORD (in himself) yesterday, to day, and forever; yet I am persuaded, that even those works that are wrought in his members by his Spirit, are so far from meriting at the hands of GOD, that, inasmuch as they flow through the channel of corrupt nature, they are tainted with much imperfection. I know of no rule of Goodness

ness but the Law of God; and so far as any work falls short of that it is sinful; much more then is it *not meritorious*. Nay supposing it even came up to the demands of the moral Law, still it would not be *meritorious*: for the Law being the only standard and touchstone of obedience, unless it even exceeded that, it could not merit. And therefore in the parable of the dutiful servant, our LORD asks, *Doth he (the master) thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.*

You endeavour to illustrate what Mr WESLEY and you have advanced upon the merit of works, by the instances of DAVID and HEZEKIAH, *who have pleaded that merit before GOD.* As to the appeal of HEZEKIAH to his own integrity, when properly taken, it is no more than any Christian may be allowed to make, consistent with the deepest humility. But the words of DAVID are much more strong, and such as no meer man ever did or can use without the highest arrogance and presumption. They are as follows: *The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me. I was upright before him, therefore hath he recompensed me according to my righteousness,* Psalm xviii. You astonish me beyond measure, in saying "*thas it is contradicting the whole context to affirm that DAVID here personates CHRIST.*" Whereas a few verses further, in the very same psalm, he thus speaks: *Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people: and thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have*
not

not known shall serve me. As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me. Surely, dear SIR, you will no longer affirm, that DAVID in this psalm does not speak in the person of CHRIST. I am sure that when he speaks in his own person his language is very different: *Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O LORD, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified. If thou, LORD, shouldest be extreme to mark what is done amiss, who may abide it?* And yet it is from these and the like scriptures that you conclude, *that those who have a clear witness they have done what GOD commanded, may without heresy, humbly demand the promised reward.*

BUT, dear SIR, where is the man who hath such a witness in himself of having done what GOD commanded? And supposing he had done this, we have already proved, that so far from being able to *demand the promised reward*, upon the plea of merit, (for that you are speaking of in the examples before us) he would be still an unprofitable servant; and his claim to a recompense, instead of being an instance of his humility, would only demonstrate the unsubdued pride of his Pharisaical heart. So that I can neither agree with Mr WESLEY and you in believing, that "*this is an evangelical view of things, or that by it the Redeemer is much honoured by the doctrine of the merit of good works.*" And I am certain had good Bishop BEVERIDGE been now living that he would have intirely acquiesced with me. Hear how this humble man of GOD speaks of his best thoughts. "I do not only betray the inbred
 " venom of my heart, by poisoning my com-
 " mon actions, but even my most religious per-
 " formances also, with sin. I cannot pray but I
 " sin;

" sin ; I cannot hear or preach a Sermon, but I
 " sin ; I cannot give an alms, or receive the
 " sacrament, but I sin ; nay, I cannot so much
 " as confess my sins, but my very confessions are
 " still aggravations of them ; my repentance
 " needs to be repented of, my tears want washing,
 " and the very washing of my tears needs still to
 " be washed over again with the blood of my
 " Redeemer. Thus not only the worst of my
 " sins, but even the best of my duties, speak me
 " a child of ADAM."

Private Thoughts.

I shall now endeavour to shew, that it is not
 without reason that real *Protestants* have raised
 the cry of *heresy and popery* against Mr JOHN
 WESLEY ; though with regard to the latter, we
 are not perhaps in so much danger as is imagined,
 at least, if we may form our judgments from a
 late conversation †, we are not : but however the
 popish priest may seem ashamed of the relation-
 ship, we shall now shew that there is a much
 nearer resemblance between the doctrines of Mr
 JOHN WESLEY and mother Church, than the
 popish superior chose to acknowledge.

The famous Dr ANDREW WILLET, who
 flourished in the reign of Queen ELIZABETH, in
 his controversy with the Rhemish Jesuites, thus
 states the question in dispute between us and them,
 concerning the doctrine of *merit*, in his *Synopsis*
 C *Papismi* ;

† See a pamphlet, intitled, *A Conversation between*
the Reverend Mr MADAN, RICHARD HILL, and THOMAS
POWYS, Esquires ; and Father WALSH, Superior of a Convent
of English Benedictine Monks at Paris, relative to Mr
WESLEY's Minutes ; held at the said Convent, July 13, 1771.
Sold by E. and C. DILLY in the Poultry. Price Sixpence.

Papismi; where the reader will perceive that you have done the Papists great injustice, in alledging, that they ascribe merit to *meer external performances*, done in man's own strength; whereas they give not the name of meritorious works to any but such as are wrought by the grace and Spirit of GOD; in the very same sense in which you affirm that Mr JOHN WESLEY believes them to be meritorious: for example.

“ Works done of nature, without or before
“ faith, cannot merit: but works done by God's
“ grace may,” &c. *Rhemish Papists*.

In like manner Cardinal BELLARMINE. “ Faith
“ doth indeed exclude their rejoicing that glory
“ in themselves, and in their own strength. But
“ not that rejoicing whereby we rejoice in our
“ works and merits by grace,” &c.

Doctor WILLET's answer. “ Now whereas we
“ do alledge many testimonies of the Fathers
“ against merits; BELLARMINE would shift us
“ off with this answer, that they speak of man
“ *qualis est sine gratia Dei*, as he is without
“ grace; that he cannot merit by his own
“ strength; I will therefore shew out of the
“ Fathers, that even a man in the state of grace
“ cannot merit.”

“ A Christian must not be lifted up for his
“ merits in this world, because no man here in
“ this life can say he is without sin. Whatsoever
“ he hath in this life is a gift, not a merit.”

AUGUSTINE *against PELAGIUS*.

“ Let others seek merit, let us study to find
“ grace.” BERNARD.

Doctor WILLET brings many other testimonies to prove that even the works of those who are in a state of grace cannot merit, but it is needless to quote any more: however, I cannot avoid transcribing

scribing the words of that holy Martyr ALEXANDER SETON, spoken just before he was burnt for the testimony of JESUS. "He that can shew me any
 " scripture that works do merit, or be any means
 " to our justification : for the first scripture I will
 " without any further judgment lose both my
 " ears ; for the second my tongue ; for the third
 " my neck." Fox, p. 1206.

Permit me to bring one short quotation from that zealous champion for the Popish cause, the Bishop of *Meaux*, whose book as written in French now lies open before me, but for the benefit of my English readers, I shall translate the passage, after having transcribed it from the original. "De peur que l'orgueil humain ne soit
 " flaté par l'opinion d'un merite presomptueux,
 " ce meme concile (de *Trente*) enseigne que tout
 " le prix & la valeur des œuvres Chretiennes
 " provient de la grace sanctifiante, qui nous est
 " donnée gratuitement au nom de JESUS CHRIST ;
 " et que c'est un effet de l'influence continuelle
 " que ce divin chef a sur ces membres."

"For fear that human pride should be flattered
 " by the presumptuous opinion of merit, this same
 " council (of *Trent*) teaches, that all the price
 " and value of Christian works, comes from
 " sanctifying grace, which is given us freely in
 " the name of JESUS CHRIST ; and that it is an
 " effect of the continual influence that this divine
 " Chief (or Head) has upon his members."

From all these several quotations from Popish writers, it is most evident, that the grand cause of our separation from them in the Article of Works, was not because the Church of Rome maintained a merit in outward performances, as done by men in a state of nature, for this she

utterly disclaims ; but because she held, with Mr WESLEY and his followers, the meritoriousness of those works which are done after grace received ; whereas our Reformers would in no sense admit the word when applied to man, or any thing wrought in man.

To this purpose Bishop COWPER, page 78.
 “ No man, led by the Spirit of JESUS, did ever
 “ use this word of *merit* (as applying it to man,)
 “ it is the proud speech of the spirit of Anti-
 “ christ. Search the scriptures, and ye shall see
 “ that none of all those who speak by divine in-
 “ spiration did ever use it ; yea, the godly Fathers
 “ have always abhorred it.”

BUT it is time that you should tell me, that notwithstanding all that I have said against merit, I have not yet split the hair between *our being rewarded according to our works*, and *secundum merita operum, as our works deserve*.

I confess that I by no means think the difference depends upon *the splitting of an hair* ; but that the two expressions when duly considered, are as wide as east from west.

That every man shall be rewarded *according to his works*, I read in many places of God's word ; but that any man shall be rewarded *for, because of, or according to the merit of his works*, I read in no part of that word. The former admits of an easy interpretation, according to the analogy of the Christian Faith ; when we acknowledge that the reward is not of debt, but of grace. The latter, instead of excluding boasting, opens a door for the most intolerable pride ; as it is not possible to divest the word *merit* from the idea of *worthi-
ness,*

ness, by which means the reward is no more of grace, but of debt.

If therefore good works be rewarded, it is by no means owing to the merit or deservings of the works, even though they be the works of believers: but because GOD, of his own meer favor, rich grace, and undeserved bounty, hath promised that he will freely give such reward to those whom he hath chosen in his dear Son, that they should bring forth much fruit, and that he should be glorified in them.

But although it does not require much difficulty to split the hair between a reward of merit and of grace; yet inasmuch as nothing can merit before GOD, which is not more than our duty to do, I own I can scarcely split the hair between works of *merit* and works of *supererogation*. As I have already had the unhappiness to see Mr WESLEY asserting, and Mr F. defending the former, I hope I shall never have the additional concern of seeing them jointly maintaining the latter.

From what has been said, I think it plain that it is not without cause, that we have been *so dreadfully afraid of the word merit*: And that the assertion of Mr WESLEY, that “there is no merit “ but in the blood of CHRIST *,” is much more agreeable to real Protestantism, than that we are rewarded, *secundum merita operum, according to the merit of our works*. Believe me,

Dear SIR,

With much esteem,

Yours sincerely for CHRIST’s sake,

* Mr WESLEY’S SERMONS, Vol. I. p. 249.

LETTER THE FOURTH.

Reverend and dear SIR,

IF I may plainly declare what part of Mr WESLEY's Minutes I esteem most contrary to sound doctrine, it is those positions,

1st, "That all who are convinced of sin, undervalue themselves in every respect."

2dly, "That talking of a justified, or a sanctified state, tends to mislead men; almost naturally leading them to trust in what was done in one moment. Whereas we are every hour and every moment pleasing or displeasing to God, according to our works; according to the whole of our inward tempers and outward behaviour."

First then; We will consider the position, that all who are convinced of sin, undervalue themselves in every respect.

You acknowledge, that this is an incautious expression, but you think it capable of a good construction. But, dear SIR, consider what a force you must put upon the words to give them the construction you have done. Taking them in their plain easy signification, the only idea they convey is, "That a convinced sinner is apt to have too mean an opinion of himself," Whereas if he thought that he was nothing but sin and corruption, that his heart was full of deceit and desperate wickedness, yea, enmity against God himself; if he believed there was nothing but blindness in his understanding, perverseness in his will, and disorder in his affections; that every faculty of his soul was totally depraved; and that he was all over,

over, from the crown of the head to soul of the foot, spiritual wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores: I say, if he thought all this of himself, still he would not think himself half so vile as the scripture holds him forth to view; much less would he undervalue himself. But I am so far a *real Protestant*, and Mr WESLEY's *real Friend*, as to be willing to admit of the explanation which you have given us of the above expression, rather than believe he meant it in the sense which the words at first sight must convey to every one who reads them; and therefore will dismiss this article of the Minutes, with my hopes that upon future occasions Mr WESLEY will please to be a little more explicit.

The *second* position is; that “talking of a
 “justified or sanctified state tends to mislead men;
 “almost naturally leading them to trust in what
 “was done in one moment; whereas we are
 “every hour and every moment pleasing or dis-
 “pleasing to God, according to our works;
 “according to the whole of our inward tempers
 “and outward behaviour.”

This you have earnestly laboured to defend, and what you have advanced is accompanied with no small degree of plausibility; but this plausibility is in great measure owing to a misrepresentation, (though I am persuaded not a wilful one) of the doctrine against which you militate.

You affirm, p. 87. “That if we are not every
 “moment pleasing or displeasing to God, accord-
 “ing to the works of our hearts and hands, we
 “must set our seal to the following absurdities.”

1st, “God is angry with the wicked all the
 “day, and yet there are moments in which he
 “is not angry at them.”

2dly, " Lot pleased God as much in those
 " moments in which he got drunk, and com-
 " mitted incest with his daughters, as in the day
 " he exercised hospitality towards the disguised
 " angels."

3dly, " DAVID did not displease God more
 " when he committed adultery with BATHSHEBA,
 " and imbrued his hands in her husband's blood,
 " than when he danced before the ark, or com-
 " posed the 103d Psalm."

4thly, " SOLOMON was as acceptable to God in
 " the moment his wives turned away his heart
 " after other gods, as when he chose Wisdom,
 " and his speech pleased the LORD, &c."

But, dear SIR, permit me to say, that this is
 not a true state of the case; but is a conclusion
 without premises. I know no Calvinist that ever
 set his seal to the abovementioned absurdities.
 For my own part, I most sincerely abhor the
 position as it stands in the Minutes, " That we
 " are every hour and every moment pleasing or
 " displeasing to God," &c. &c. And yet I
 equally abhor the assertion " that DAVID, (we
 " will stick to this one example as including all
 " the rest) did not *displease* God more when he
 " committed adultery with BATHSHEBA, and
 " imbrued his hands in her husband's blood,
 " than when he danced before the ark," &c. I
 know from scripture-authority, that when DAVID
 committed the sin you allude to, the thing which
 he had done *displeased the* LORD. But though I
 believe that DAVID's *sin* displeased the LORD,
 must I therefore believe that DAVID's *person*,
 came under the curse of the Law? and that
 because he was ungrateful, that God (whose gifts
 and callings are without repentance) was unfaith-
 ful?

ful? Surely no. DAVID was still a son, though a perverse one. Like backsliding EPHRAIM, he was still a pleasant child, though he went on frowardly. But the sin was very heinous, and deserved the curse of an holy God. True, and so it would if DAVID had only had a wanton or an angry thought; in this case, he had still been a murderer and adulterer in the sight of God: and that same blood which alone could prevail for murder and adultery in the heart, most assuredly prevailed for the outward commission of those crimes. If you deny the fact, where will you draw the line? Sin, every sin is the transgression of the Law: and the wages of every sin is death. *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them*; is the unchangeable voice of God himself. If therefore one believer sin by an unclean thought, and another by an unclean act, does the former continue in a state of grace, and the other forfeit his sonship? Take heed, dear SIR, lest you should be forced to go to *Rome* for an answer to this query. For my own part, I see not how you can resolve it, without having recourse to the popish distinction between *venial* and *mortal* sins, and then I am sure there is an end both of Law and Gospel.

As every believer has at once the old and new nature in him, and as these principles of flesh and spirit are for ever at war together, and striving for the mastery; although the promise is absolute, that sin shall not reign as a king; yet it may for a time usurp as a tyrant. The old man may for a season appear to have gotten the upper hand; grace may be held down by the power of some besetting sin, and the poor soul constrained to cry

cry out (if he can cry at all) *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me? The evil that I would not, that I do; and the good that I would, I do not. I find a law in my members warring against the law in my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members.* When a suitable temptation is permitted to work upon some particular corruption of the heart, especially if it be the man's besetting or constitutional sin, where is the soul that can stand before it without the special power of God; who for wise reasons (as in the express case of HEZEKIAH) sometimes leaves his people to themselves in such circumstances; and then there are no lengths they may not run, nor any depths they may not fall into, (the sin against the holy Ghost excepted) as we see in this dreadful instance of DAVID, who notwithstanding these horrible and repeated backslidings, still does not lose the character of "the man after God's own heart." And indeed, if this were not the case, what becomes of those scriptures? *If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, JESUS CHRIST the righteous. There is no condemnation to them that are in CHRIST JESUS. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? By one offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified. Ye are complete in him.*

We are apt to set up mountainous distinctions concerning the various degrees of sin, especially of sins after conversion; but what are all the streams and outward acts, compared with that fountain and body of sin from whence they flow? And what is all sin before the infinitely precious atoning blood of the God-man JESUS? Either CHRIST has fulfilled the whole law, and born the

the curse, or he has not. If he has not, no soul can ever be saved; if he has, then all debts and claims against his people, be they more or be they less, be they small or be they great, be they before or be they after conversion, are for ever and for ever cancelled. All Trespases are forgiven them.—They are justified from all things.—They already have everlasting life.—They are now (virtually) sat down in heavenly places with CHRIST their forerunner; and as soon shall Satan pluck his crown from his head, as his purchase from his hand.

But you think, with Mr WESLEY, that talking of a justified or sanctified state tends to mislead men. Yet if there be such a state, why is it not to be spoke of? Are the doctrines of the Gospel to be kept out of sight, for fear men of corrupt minds should abuse them? Must we be so fearful to trust God with his own truths, as always to starve his own children?

But if Mr WESLEY should still be unwilling to admit the expression of a *justified* or *sanctified state*, when applied to believers as they stand in the second ADAM, let me ask, if he will allow that there is any such thing as a state of sin and condemnation to unbelievers, as they stand in the first ADAM? And whether Mr WESLEY is afraid of misleading men by talking of *such* a state? If one be a state of guilt and condemnation, the other must be a state of pardon and justification; and if no acts, however seemingly holy and good, are pleasant and acceptable to God, whilst a soul is out of CHRIST, and under the curse of the Law; so, on the other hand, no falls or backslidings in God's children, can ever bring them again under condemnation, because the law of the spirit of life in

CHRIST

CHRIST JESUS, has made them free from the law of sin and death. As GOD views the head, so he views all the members, *without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.* JESUS having made peace through the blood of his cross, hath now reconciled them in the body of his flesh through death, that he might present them holy and unblameable, and unproveable in his sight. Black in themselves, they are comely through his comeliness put upon them; and therefore he, *who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, can nevertheless address them with, *Thou art all fair my love, my undefiled, there is no spot in thee!* As the LORD did not set his love upon his people at the first for any thing in them, so that love can never vary on account of their miscarriages; and that for this reason, namely, that he ever considers them as one with his own dear Son, in whom he is *always well pleased; bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh.* If this were not the case, how could dear Mr FLETCHER himself be pleasing to GOD one single *hour or moment?* However he may think that others have attained to sinless perfection, I am sure he is too low in his own eyes, and has too much humility to assert, that there ever was the hour or moment when the moral Law could discover no blemish in him; and if he kept not the whole Law, he was a sinner; for sin is the transgression of the Law; and if a sinner, then liable to the curse, for *curst is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the Law, to do them; the wages of sin* (of the least deviation from the Law) *is death; he that keepeth the whole Law, and yet offendeth in one point, is guilty of all.*

The capital error then which appears in the last Article of Mr WESLEY's Minutes, arises from

from confounding a believer's person with his actions. The former always stands absolved, always compleat in the everlasting Righteousness of the Redeemer; whilst the latter are certainly pleasing or displeasing to God, every hour and every moment, according to the nature of them. Sin is sin in a believer as much as in an unbeliever; and wheresoever God sees sin, it cannot but be hateful to the eyes of his purity. And although no good works, even of a regenerate man, come up to the demands of the Law, and therefore cannot, as saith our XIIth Article, *bear the severity of God's Judgment*, (much less can they merit at his hands) yet we believe, with the scriptures and our own Church, "that they are
 "pleasing and acceptable to God in CHRIST,
 "and do necessarily spring out of a true and
 "lively faith; insomuch that by them a lively
 "faith may be as evidently known, as a tree
 "discerned by its fruits."

This, dear SIR, I most firmly believe; and yet I also believe that these fruits may, for a wintry season, be blown down by the boisterous winds of temptation and corruption, and yet the branches still remain alive, being secretly fed and nourished by sap from CHRIST the living vine: and that Mr WESLEY did once believe the same, is most evident from that sweet HYMN which he has given us, p. 138, in his own collection, with the tunes annexed, and which I am told was written by his Brother, Mr CHARLES WESLEY.

Barren altho' my soul remain,
 And no one bud of Grace appear,
 No fruit of all my toil and pain,
 But sin, and only sin, is here;

Altho'

Altho' my gifts and comforts lost,
 My blooming hopes cut off I see,
 Yet will I in my SAVIOUR trust,
 And glory that he dy'd for me.

Here the state of justification and sanctification are both earnestly maintained and contended for; by the two Mr WESLEY's (for one writes, and the other adopts the words written) under the lowest state a poor believer can be reduced to; even when every bud of grace is fallen and withered, and when sin, and nothing else but sin, appears in the soul.

Upon the whole then, I am so far from agreeing with Mr WESLEY's Minutes, that I intirely acquiesce in the sentiments of his Hymns and Sermons *, and think that talking of a justified or sanctified state, (which means in one word a state of salvation) is so far from misleading men, that it is the only thing worth talking of.

It cannot be thought foreign to our purpose here, to inquire why He, who is holiness and wisdom itself, often permits his own dearest children to fall and backslide in the manner we see they do, from those scripture-instances you have brought.

God's ways are *past finding out*. He often brings about his purposes by those very means which, to an human eye, would certainly defeat them. But he has always the same thing in view; namely, his own glory in the salvation of his Elect by CHRIST JESUS. This, ADAM was accomplishing when he put the whole world under the

* Mr JOHN WESLEY in his Sermon on 2 Cor. v. 17. says, "We allow that the STATE of a justified person is inexpressibly great and glorious."

the curse. This, Kings and Rulers, HEROD and PONTIUS PILATE, the Gentiles and the people of the Jews, when they were gathered together against the LORD and the holy child JESUS; for we find, that by all their fury and rage, they did *whatsoever* GOD's hand and GOD's council determined before to be done. This the Patriarchs were accomplishing when they sold JOSEPH into *Egypt*. This ONESIMUS, when he robbed PHILEMON his master; and flying from Justice, was, brought under PAUL's preaching, converted to CHRIST, and restored to his master, not meerly as a servant, but as a brother. Who would have supposed that the royal and holy seed was to be continued by the incestuous commerce of JUDAH with TAMAR, and through the adulterous one of DAVID with BATHSHEBA, the wife of URIAH, and mother of SOLOMON? How has many a poor soul, who has been faithless through fear of man, even blessed GOD for PETER's denial? And how have many others been raised out of the mire, and recovered their first love, by considering the tenderness shewn to the incestuous *Corinthian*, and his restoration, by the command of the Apostle himself, to Church-fellowship and communion?

We cannot, without impeaching the wisdom and omniscience of GOD, deny that he foresaw every thing that was or would be in his own jewels, to the end of their lives. He knew what trials at such and such a time would overtake them; what temptations and corruptions they would have to grapple with, and how they would be overcome by them: but the motives of his love were in himself, and not at all dependent upon any thing in his people; who being chosen
in

in CHRIST, loved in CHRIST, called in CHRIST, and preserved in CHRIST to the end; till God can see any cause not to love his own Son, He cannot cease to love those who are one with Him, and He one with them. Whereas if his people were to have been loved for their own sakes, He never could have loved them at all.

Again; the LORD hath promised to make *all things work together for good* to those that love him, and are the called after his purpose; and if all things, then their very sins and corruptions are included in the royal promise. Oftentimes when gifts and graces have puffed them up, a grievous fall shall serve to make them know their place, to drive them nearer to CHRIST, to make them more dependent on his strength, to keep them more watchful for the future, to cause them to pity and sympathize with others in the like situation, and to make them sing louder to the praise of free sovereign restoring grace throughout all the ages of Eternity.

For these, and other wise and gracious purposes, they who have great grace and great experience may (as in the case of DAVID) be suffered to fall into sins, which, for the matter of them, are perhaps more heinous and scandalous than ever they committed in their natural state. An healthy man may fall down and break a bone, as well as a weak one; and yet he would be mad indeed who should wilfully fall down and break a leg or an arm, because he knew there was a skilful surgeon at hand to set it. DAVID complained loudly of broken bones, as he had need; and yet he blesses God that he had made those bones which were broken by sin to rejoice in the LORD, who

who had *healed all his infirmities, and covered all his iniquities.*

No thanks to sin, if the LORD over-rule it for the good of his people. It is still the abominable thing which his soul hateth: and whatever may be his secret will, we are to keep close to the declarations of his own written word, which bids us to resist sin even unto blood. Whosoever can delight himself in sin, under the persuasion that God will make it work together for his good, is under a most powerful delusion of the Devil. Such an one is indeed accomplishing God's decree, but he carries a dreadful mark in his forehead, that such decree is, that he *shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the LORD.* Sin is directly contrary to the new nature of a believer, to that incorruptible seed which remaineth in him, and therefore *he cannot sin because he is born of God*; that is, the new man, the regenerate part, cannot sin. *It is not I, (says the Apostle) but sin that dwelleth in me.* Yea, so great an aversion is there between the love of sin and the new creature, that he esteems the position, *let us sin that grace may abound,* as the most damnable doctrine that ever steamed out of the bottomless pit of hell: and though grace and salvation is all his song, yet he knoweth that the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, teacheth us, that *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.*

Believe me, dear SIR, I heartily join with you in lamenting the want of zeal, meekness, and heavenly-mindedness among Professors of the Gospel; but I most firmly believe that the grand cause of so much lifeless profession, is owing to

D

leanness

leanness of soul, and this leanness owing to the sheep of CHRIST being fed in barren pastures and muddled waters. CHRIST not being held out in all his glory and fulness, the grace of faith flags and withers, and little or no fruit appears: whilst others, in order to get as far as ever they can from a legalized gospel, and inherent sinless perfection, are hurried by Satan into all the depths of avowed practical Antinomianism. And for this assertion, I have no less authority than that of Mr JOHN WESLEY himself, who, in his Sermon upon 2 Cor. v. 17. tells us, “ that the doctrine of believers being without sin, is quite new in the Church of CHRIST: that it was never heard of for seventeen hundred years, never till it was discovered by Count ZINZENDORF. And that he does not remember to have seen the least intimation of it, either in any ancient or modern writers, unless in some of the wild, ranting, Antinomians.” He farther adds, that “ the maintaining this doctrine (of sinless perfection) is attended with the most fatal consequences: that it cuts off all watching against our evil nature, against the DELILAH which we are told is gone, though she is still lying in our bosom: that it tears away the shield of weak believers, deprives them of their faith, and so leaves them exposed to all the assaults of the world, the flesh, and the Devil.” [Mr WESLEY then goes on] “ Let us therefore hold fast the sound doctrine once delivered to the saints, and delivered down by them with the written word to all succeeding generations: that although we are renewed, cleansed, purified, sanctified, the moment we truly believe

of sinless perfection, we shall remain so to the end of our lives.

“ in CHRIST, yet we are not then renewed, cleansed,
 “ purified altogether: But the flesh, the evil na-
 “ ture still remains (though subdued) and wars
 “ against the Spirit. Believe me,

Dear SIR,

With the truest esteem,

Your unfeigned friend, &c.

LETTER THE FIFTH.

Reverend and dear SIR,

ALTHOUGH I have now done with Mr
 WESLEY's Minutes, yet I must beg your
 indulgence whilst I speak on two or three par-
 ticulars which struck me upon the reperusal of
 your book.

First, You will pardon me if I judge you
 wrongfully in thinking that you speak rather in a
 sneering, or at least in too light a manner, of that
 heart-cheering expression so often used by awak-
 ened divines, *the finished salvation of CHRIST*.

You will also pardon me, if I am unjust in my
 opinion, that you do not mention with a becoming
 concern and gravity the unhappy affair between
 the man and the woman, p. 23. but rather too
 much in the manner we might suppose a man of
 the world would speak of it. You acknowledge,
 however, that this affair happened in one of Mr
 WESLEY's Societies, and not many miles from

your parish ; and you allow, that the parties despised their teachers as *not being clear in the gospel*. This being the case, is not my assertion hereby the more verified, that “ some, in order to get as far as ever they can from a legalized gospel, are hurried by Satan into all the depths of avowed practical Antinomianism.”

I plead your excuse yet again, if I observe, that at the very time you complain heavily against those who censure Mr WESLEY, you yourself are not very sparing of hard names against Doctor CRISP. I am fully persuaded that you judge there is a cause for so doing ; why may not Mr SHIRLEY therefore be allowed the liberty of thinking Mr WESLEY's Minutes to be as heretical and full of popery, as you think Doctor CRISP's Sermons to be full of Antinomianism ? I am sure Mr WESLEY never wrote more strenuously against the merit of works, and in defence of the protestant doctrine of justification by the imputed Righteousness of CHRIST, than Doctor CRISP has written against that damnable position, *Let us sin, that grace may abound* ; and in defence of evangelical holiness and the practice of all good works. So that the hard names and heavy censures thrown out against the Doctor, are by far more unjustifiable, than what has been delivered concerning Mr WESLEY.

But as the particular design of my writing, is not to defend any man whatsoever, I shall say but very little concerning Doctor CRISP ; and yet I think it but justice to his memory, to affirm, that even his adversaries were constrained to acknowledge that his life was uncommonly holy and exemplary, and that he died in the full assurance of faith. As to his Sermons, from which
you

you have culled the most unguarded expressions that are to be found in them, I shall offer no other remarks upon them, than what Mr THOMAS COLE, Author of a treatise on *Regeneration*, and some time Lecturer at *Pinner's-Hall*, has already made in the title prefixed to the first volume.

“ This work favours of a true gospel-spirit ;
 “ though some expressions taken by themselves,
 “ without any relation and coherence to the mat-
 “ ters handled in it, may seem harsh ; yet I am
 “ persuaded they are all capable of a good con-
 “ struction, and were so intended by the Author :
 “ They who carp at them, I fear, will be found
 “ wider from the gospel in their principles than
 “ this Author was in his.”

This was the opinion of that eminent Minister of CHRIST, Mr THOMAS COLE, relative to Doctor CRISP'S Sermons ; and though Mr COLE was never suspected of Antinomianism, yet had he lived in our day, there is no doubt but he would have thought what you sarcastically call *the Crispian Orthodoxy*, at least as sound as the *Weslean* ; and that there might be found as many *bot-heads* among the asserters of man's merit and sinless perfection, as among the maintainers of human impotency and God's sovereign decrees. And I am certain, that whosoever will read Doctor CRISP'S Sermons upon *Free Grace the teacher of good works* ; upon *Self-denial* ; and upon *Christian Liberty no licentious doctrine* ; must acknowledge, that the Doctor has perhaps written more strikingly upon the necessity of holiness and deadness to the world, than any other Author whatever.

You give us to understand, p. 89. “ that the
 “ Reverend Mr WESLEY, and the Reverend Mr
 “ SELLON, have so cut down and stripped *the*
 “ *Crispian*

“ *Crispian Orthodoxy* (by which it is evident you
 “ there mean the doctrines of Election and Per-
 “ severance) that some people think it actually
 “ lies without either root, bark, or branches,
 “ exposed to the view of those who have courage
 “ enough to see and think for themselves.”

As to the Reverend Mr SELLON's book, I have never read it; and from the accounts I hear of the imbecillity of the performance, and the abusive unchristian spirit with which it is written, I believe I shall never give myself the trouble. But I have read some little pieces of Mr WESLEY's against the doctrines of Election and Perseverance. And I assure you, upon honor, that they have greatly tended to establish my belief in those most comfortable doctrines. And I could point you to a very valuable friend and neighbour of yours (a Gentleman of Fortune, for whom you have a cordial regard, which regard is not less on his part,) who, upon my asking him how he came to be so deeply grounded in the doctrine of Election? made answer, that it was chiefly owing to his reading a tract of Mr JOHN WESLEY's, in defence of universal redemption. And a worthy Clergyman of the Church of England assured me, that he was once quite for the doctrine of falling from Grace, till he happened to read a little piece written by Mr JOHN WESLEY against perseverance, which entirely brought him into the contrary opinion.

These are facts, dear SIR, which I can assert upon my own personal knowledge, and they bear such incontestible proof how much service Mr WESLEY's pen has done to the Calvinistic cause, that some very experienced Christians have expressed their hopes that Mr WESLEY would either

write

write again upon the subject, or publish a new Edition of his former Tracts.

AND now, dear SIR, I cannot conclude these Letters without expressing my earnest desire, that the contents of them may never cause any decrease of love and christian fellowship between us. Pardon then, my dear SIR, I ardently beseech you, O pardon all that you have found amiss in the unworthy Author of these Epistles, and much I am sure your charity will have to overlook *. If we cannot see things alike now, I hope the time is not far off when we shall be thoroughly united in sentiment, as well as in heart, and each of us casting our crowns before the throne, shall join our voices in that one harmonious song of praise with which the regions of bliss shall echo without intermission, and without end. *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom,*

* As I am also sensible that some improper expressions may have escaped me, either now or in a former piece, with regard to Mr WESLEY, I desire to crave forgiveness for all such, and to take shame to myself for whatsoever has appeared to favor too strongly of my own spirit; for however I may disapprove of Mr WESLEY's doctrines, I still find it very hard to give up the favourable Opinion I was wont to entertain of him; and had it not been for the publication of the Five Letters in defence of the Minutes (which Letters however I did not see till a long while after they came out) the *Paris* conversation would probably never have seen the light, notwithstanding the desire expressed by some particular friends that it should appear in print; however it was contrary to my order that it was sold in *Shrewsbury*, and I actually wrote to my bookseller there to stop the sale of it; and this I did, notwithstanding the Vindication of the Minutes had not only been publicly recommended from Mr WESLEY's pulpit in that Town, but had been hawked about by his preachers throughout the whole kingdom. But as I hear Mr F——R has another piece in the press, it will probably be necessary to order the Dialogue to be again sold in the country.

wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing. Blessing and honour, and glory and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!

In the mean while, let me acknowledge before the world, that there is not a man living to whom I am more indebted for repeated instances of affection, and labors of love, than I am to dear Mr F——R ; and therefore, notwithstanding all differences of judgment between us, I trust he will always give me leave to subscribe myself,

His most affectionate Friend and Brother,

In the bonds of the gospel of peace,

The Author of PIETAS OXONIENSIS.



F I N I S.

